

Certification Services

The Geographically Updated Population Certification Program (GUPCP) Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Geographically Updated Population Certification Program (GUPCP)?

GUPCP is a Census Bureau-sponsored program that enables local and tribal governments and other customers to obtain certified Census 2000 population and housing counts for updated or newly established governmental unit boundaries. A geographically updated population certificate confirms that an official population count is an accurate re-tabulation of Census 2000 population and housing counts based upon boundary updates legally effective after January 1, 2000, the date for boundaries used in tabulating Census 2000.

2. How is a Geographically Updated Population Certification different from a certified Special Census population count?

As stated in question 1, a Geographically Updated Population Certification is a *re-tabulation of Census 2000* population and housing counts within new boundaries. (“New” boundaries are boundaries that become effective after January 1, 2000, the date for boundaries used to report Census 2000 data.) The geographically updated certified count will include only the population and housing that existed and was counted at the time of Census 2000. It will not include counts for new housing or group quarters (i.e. nursing homes, college dormitories, prisons, etc.) population. In other words, if a local government wants to know the population within a housing development built after Census 2000 was taken, they could not get that information from GUPCP.

A Special Census is an *actual enumeration* of housing and group quarters of a specific area, conducted on a specified date. Unlike the GUPCP counts, Special Census counts will include new housing and population that came into the area after Census 2000. The Special Census also will produce demographic detail for the population, such as information on age, sex, relationships within households, race, Hispanic origin, occupancy or vacancy status, type of vacancy, tenure for housing units and any other information Special Census customers may choose to collect through other questions added to the questionnaire. GUPCP will provide only total population and housing unit counts. For more information on Special Censuses, visit <http://www.census.gov/field/www/specialcensus/index.htm>.

3. Why would local and tribal governmental units participate in GUPCP?

In order to apply for state funding disbursements, local governmental units may be required by state law(s) to obtain a Census Bureau certified population count for their governmental unit in its updated or new boundaries. In addition, federally sponsored programs may require or honor a certified, official Census Bureau population count for determining program eligibility or funding distributions. Local and tribal governmental units also might need certified population counts for other administrative or planning purposes.

4. Can I get a geographically updated population and housing count certification for any geographic area?

No. At this time, the Census Bureau is only offering geographically updated population and housing count certifications for the following types of areas:

- Federally recognized American Indian reservations and off-reservation trust land entities. This includes a reservation designated as a colony, community, Indian community, Indian village, pueblo, rancheria, reservation, reserve, or village.
- Counties and statistically equivalent entities, including counties in 48 states; boroughs, municipalities, and census areas in Alaska; parishes in Louisiana; and municipios in Puerto Rico.
- Minor civil divisions in the 28 states in which they exist: Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.
- Incorporated places, including boroughs in Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; cities in 49 states and the District of Columbia; cities, boroughs, and municipalities in Alaska; towns in 30 states (excluding towns in New England, New York and Wisconsin which are minor civil divisions); and villages in 20 states.
- Consolidated cities.
- School districts.

Geographically updated population and housing count certifications are not currently available for other areas or individual census blocks split by boundaries. We do have tentative plans to expand the GUPCP to accommodate such areas in the future. We will continue to update our main certification webpage at <http://www.census.gov/mso/www/certification/> as the program develops.

5. How do I participate in GUPCP?

Customers can print and fill out the request form (Form BC-1869), available on the certification web page at <http://www.census.gov/mso/www/certification/>. Instructions for filling out the form are on the reverse side, or page 2. You can fax the form to the Customer Services Center (301-457-4714), or submit the request via e-mail (MSO.certify@census.gov) or phone (301-763-INFO). A letter or e-mail communication requesting the service without Form BC-1869 will be accepted only if it contains all the information necessary to complete the form.

6. What information does the Census Bureau need in order to process my GUPCP request?

Please date your request, enter your name, the name of your governmental unit or entity, the county or counties in which it is located, and the name of the highest-ranking elected official. Please also include a contact name, mailing address, phone and fax numbers and an e-mail

address. If you need more than one copy of the certificate, indicate how many copies are needed and where they should be mailed, including addressee name(s), title(s), office(s), and mailing address(es). In addition to the fee for the certification (see question 11), there is a \$35 charge for each additional certificate requested.

Note: Additional original certificates may be required by state governments or other agencies before they will accept certified counts. For example, the state of Illinois requires that the U.S. Census Bureau send an original copy of the geographically updated population certificate directly to their Secretary of State's office, before they will recognize the certified population. Because the Census Bureau is not always aware of the requirements of various states and programs, it is your responsibility to tell us where additional certificates should be mailed.

Finally, we ask you to provide the name, street address, census tract, and census block of any large facilities, such as college dormitories, nursing homes, military barracks, or prisons, enumerated during Census 2000 that you believe should be included within the new reported boundaries. This will help us to ensure inclusion of all relevant facility population as part of the certification.

7. What is the difference between annual and expedited processing?

The Census Bureau collects new and updated boundaries and processes the population data associated with those boundaries *annually* to support a variety of programs and surveys. All boundary changes processed in this cycle must be effective on or before January 1 and reported by April 1. Annual processing is completed by mid- to late-September. If your certificate is processed within the annual cycle, it will be available around October 1. Certification requests filled through annual processing are less expensive than expedited certification requests, because the required work overlaps with other programs and costs are shared.

Expedited processing is available to customers who cannot wait until after October 1 for their certificate or cannot report their boundaries by April 1. Expedited processing is also the only option for customers who want certified population and housing counts for boundaries that become effective after January 1 of that year. Expedited processing is more expensive than annual processing, because the Census Bureau must process the boundary change and population data independently of the annual schedule. Certificates delivered through expedited processing are delivered approximately 12 weeks after the Census Bureau has received the full fee from the customer and processing can begin.

8. What is the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)? How do I know if my area was included in the BAS?

The Census Bureau conducts an annual survey, referred to as the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS), to collect the correct legal boundaries, address ranges, entity names and legal area descriptions. The BAS is sent to governmental units in January of each year and includes a map for the governmental unit to update. All information reported on the BAS must be effective on or before January 1 of that year and recipients are asked to complete and return the survey within 15 days.

Unfortunately, budget constraints prevent us from surveying every governmental unit in every year. Table 1 describes the general rules for determining which entities will receive the BAS in a

given year over this decade. A list of the current year's BAS participants can be accessed at <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/bas/bas03/bas2k3uv.html>.

Table 1 – Annual BAS Universe

Entity Type	Years Scheduled to Receive BAS
Federally recognized American Indian Reservations, off-reservation trust lands, and tribal subdivisions	Every year
Counties and equivalent entities	Every year
Minor Civil Divisions (MCDs)	MCDs in the six New England states every year; MCDs with population of 10,000 or more in Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin in years 2002 and 2007; All MCDs in years 2008, 2009 and 2010
Incorporated Places	Newly incorporated places every year; places with 5,000 or more people every year; places with 2,500 or more people in years 2002 and 2007; all places in years 2008, 2009, and 2010
Consolidated Cities	Every year

School district boundary information is collected every other year through a program separate from the BAS.

9. What if my area did not receive a Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)?

If your area is not included in the BAS universe and you elect to participate in GUPCP, the Census Bureau can provide maps, instructions for annotating them, and postage paid pre-addressed envelopes for returning the maps after they have been updated. The Census Bureau will ship maps to customers within three weeks of receiving the GUPCP request. Customers should update and return the maps no more than 15 days after they are received.

10. Does a GUPCP certification cost anything?

Yes. The Census Bureau's Customer Services Center will review your request and provide you with a cost estimate. The Census Bureau charges for the time and resources used to provide this service. Costs range from \$693 to \$9,075 depending upon the amount of work that may be necessary to fulfill your request (see question 11). Additional copies of the certificate will cost \$35 each.

Should you decide to go forward with the certification, we will need to collect the full fee before we can begin work. Payment can be made by credit card, check, money order or census deposit account. To expedite paying by check, consider sending your check by courier to our headquarters location.

To send via Courier only:

U.S. Census Bureau
Attn: Certifications
Customer Services Center, Room 1579-3 (MS 0801)

4700 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD 20746

Please make checks payable to: Commerce-Census

If you plan to mail your payment to us, please use this address:

U.S. Department of Commerce
Bureau of the Census
Attn: Certifications
Customer Services Center, RM 1579-3
Washington, DC 20233-0801

11. How are the fees determined?

The Census Bureau has developed a variable fee structure for the Geographically Updated Population Certification Program (GUPCP). In some cases, the work needed to produce a population certificate overlaps with regular annual processing activities supporting other Census Bureau programs. In such cases, the fee is reduced since existing programs partially cover costs.

Prices for geographically updated population certifications will depend on a) when the boundaries for the certified area become effective; b) whether the new boundaries are reported to the Census Bureau in our annual Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS); c) when the boundaries were reported; and d) whether the customer is willing to wait until the end of our annual processing cycle (after October 1) to receive the certification. In general, GUPCP customers are more likely to qualify for a lower-cost option if they are more flexible with their schedules. Table 2 summarizes the conditions for each cost option.

Table 2 – Program Options and Conditions

Case Type	Conditions	Fee
1A	New or updated boundaries are effective on or before January 1 of the calendar year. Customer reports boundaries to the Census Bureau by April 1 in current or previous years' BAS. Certificate is delivered after October 1.	\$693
2A	New or updated boundaries are effective on or before January 1 of the calendar year. Customer reports boundaries to the Census Bureau in current year's BAS. Expedited certificate (delivered to customer within three months after the fee is received).	\$1,530
1B	New or updated boundaries are effective on or before January 1 of the calendar year. Customer is not in current or previous years' BAS universe, but will report updated boundaries by April 1 of the calendar year. (Customer must pay fee by February 1 in order to ensure that boundaries can be reported by April 1.) Certificate is delivered after October 1.	\$1,799
2B	New or updated boundaries are effective on or before January 1 of the calendar year. Customer is not in current or previous years' BAS universe. Expedited certificate (delivered to customer within three	\$2,636

	months after the fee is received).	
2C	New or updated boundaries are effective after January 1 of the calendar year, regardless of when they are reported. Processing begins after July 1 of the calendar year. Expedited certificate (delivered to customer within three months after the fee is received and processing begins).	\$2,636
2D	New or updated boundaries are effective after January 1 of the calendar year, regardless of when they are reported. Processing begins prior to July 1 of the calendar year. Expedited certificate (delivered to customer within three months after the fee is received and processing begins).	\$9,075

The processing fee and/or time of delivery of the certification may be changed if the Census Bureau finds that the effective date of action (for boundary changes or incorporation) is different from the date reported in Box 5b on the application form.

For more information on how customers can modify their request to potentially lower the cost of their certification, see question 12.

12. Explain the variation in fees for geographically updated population and housing certifications.

Cost differences reflect the amount of resources needed to process a request over and above boundary collection, processing, and geographic database maintenance operations supported by our annual budgets. The fewer extra demands placed on resources, the lower the fees. Most of the costs associated with certifications are incurred from 1) collecting boundary information, and 2) processing the population data for the new boundaries. The Census Bureau is budgeted to collect boundary information through our annual Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS), and to process population data to reflect geographic changes. The work is done annually, and we only update boundaries that were legally effective on or before January 1 of the calendar year and reported by April 1. Annual processing is completed around October 1.

If an entity requests a population certification, is part of the BAS universe, reports their new or updated boundaries on that survey by April 1, and can wait until our annual processing is complete (October 1) before receiving their certification, the costs associated with boundary collection and geographic processing will be covered within our annual budget. This is the situation surrounding case 1A. ([See question 11 for a description of the case types.](#)) Case 2A is similar to 1A, but includes a surcharge for expedited processing for customers who cannot wait until October 1 to receive their certification.

An area that is not in the annual BAS universe but requests a population certification for boundaries legally effective on or before January 1, can report these boundaries to the Census Bureau by April 1*, and can wait until October 1 before receiving their certificate, will pay a surcharge to cover costs associated with collecting and digitizing boundary information for the area. This is the situation covered by case 1B. Case 2B is more expensive because the entity must pay surcharges for being added to the BAS universe *and* having expedited processing.

Cases 2C and 2D allow a customer to request an expedited population certification for boundaries reported as effective after January 1 of the calendar year. If processing of these post-January 1 boundaries does not begin until after July 1 of the calendar year,

they can be processed in our annual geographic database. There will be surcharges to cover costs associated with collecting and digitizing boundary information and for expedited processing. This situation is described by case 2C. When processing for post-January 1 boundaries begins prior to July 1 (the situation described in case 2D), the Census Bureau must set up and maintain a separate geographic database from that used for the other case types. This incurs a significant cost increase that is passed on to the customer. Customers can avoid this cost increase by requesting that the Census Bureau wait until July to begin processing their case, or by waiting until the following calendar year and reporting their boundaries as effective on or before January 1. The boundaries can then be recorded in the Census Bureau's annual geographic database and the population and housing counts certified under one of the other case types.

13. How long will it take to obtain a certification?

The time it takes to obtain a certification will vary. Case 1A and 1B requests, which are completely processed within existing Census Bureau program schedules and processes (part of annual Census Bureau processing), will be available starting around October 1. This timeframe assumes that the Census Bureau received the certification request and all relevant materials (updated maps) by April 1* of that year and the boundary updates were effective on or before January 1 of that year. Case 2A, 2B and 2C certifications (expedited requests) are generally processed within 12 weeks.

14. What exactly will I receive from the Census Bureau?

The Census Bureau will produce a certificate, defined as an "Attestation," that is, a signed statement by a Census Bureau official attesting to the authenticity of the certified Census 2000 population and housing count for the new or updated geographic area. Customarily, the certificate is produced for the highest elected official of the governmental unit requesting the certificate. If additional copies were requested on the original certification request form, those recipients will also receive original certificates.

The certificate will include the name of the entity, its updated Census 2000 population and housing counts and a standard effective date of January 1 as reported through the Census Bureau's Boundary and Annexation Survey. (The BAS requests boundaries with an effective date as of January 1 of the reporting year, which basically means any legal actions taken during the preceding calendar year and no later than January 1 of the new year.) Upon customer request, the Census Bureau will enter the date (on the certificate) of the last reported boundary change action, such as that reported in the BAS by a local ordinance number (used in most states), LAFCO number (California only), or local law number (New York only), in lieu of the standard January 1 date. For new incorporations or the legal action to be certified under Case 2C, the effective date will be the date of incorporation or the boundary change specified by local ordinance, LAFCO, or local law number.

15. How will the certificate be shipped to me?

All population certificates will be shipped via Federal Express at no additional charge to you.

16. What if I miss the April 1 deadline for returning the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)?

Returning the BAS by April 1 is only a requirement if you wish to participate in GUPCP through annual processing (case 1A or 1B). (See question 11 for case type descriptions.) If you had agreed to participate in GUPCP annual processing, and do not return your maps by April 1, you will have 2 options. You could choose to receive the certified population count through one of our expedited processing cases types (2A or 2B). In that event, we would issue you a full refund for the annual processing request and enter a new order for a certificate processed expeditiously. If you do not wish to receive your certification expeditiously, you would have the option of canceling your order and receiving a partial refund (see question 17 below).

17. What if I change my mind and wish to cancel my order?

If you decide to cancel, we will offer you a partial refund. Refund amounts will be reduced by the costs we have incurred for work we have already undertaken to fulfill your request. For example, if your order required us to send you the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) maps when you otherwise would not have received them (case types 1B, 2B and 2C), and you cancel after we have prepared and sent out the survey, your refund will be less than if you had canceled before we sent out the maps. If you cancel after you have returned the maps and we have begun our processing, we will have to recover our processing costs and your refund will be even less. Our customer services staff will be happy to discuss the refund terms with you when you place your order.

18. Will geographically updated certified population counts be reflected in the next round of population estimates released by the Census Bureau?

Yes, if certain conditions are met. The Census Bureau's annual population estimates are always based on boundaries as they exist on January 1 of the estimate year. Geographic update processing for population estimates is performed annually, and is one of the Census Bureau programs with which GUPCP annual processing requests overlap (see question 11). Therefore, if your request is fulfilled within our annual processing cycle (case types 1A or 1B), your updated boundaries and certified population will be reflected in the next round of population estimates. If your population certification request is fulfilled with one of our expedited processing cases (types 2A, 2B or 2C), your boundaries and certified population counts will only be reflected in your next estimate if your updated boundaries were effective as of January 1 and were reported by April 1.

19. I have more questions. Where can I call to discuss my request?

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Services Center at 301-763-INFO (4636), and a representative will take your request and/or have one of our population specialists contact you.

*If the customer is not within the Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) universe (see question 8), they must request the certification and pay the fee by February 1 in order to ensure that boundaries will be processed by April 1.

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